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A GREAT MANY BACK ISSUES of Rail Travel Newsletter are still available. This issue is number 45. Vol. 1, which started the first Monday of December, 1970, contains 26 issues. Vol. 2 started January 1972. Many issues of Vol. 1 are now sold out; Vol. 2 is nearly complete. Back issues cost 25¢ each. If you are a subscriber, we will credit your present subscription with any missing issues you order, unless you indicate otherwise. Write to address above.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

25¢

VOL. 2 NO. 19
OCTOBER 2, 1972
#45

Revelations of an Amtrak ticket agent

NEW TEXAS EAGLE

San Joaquin Valley

Russian rail progress

World Series trains

LETTERS

I have read with interest the letter from Dr. Richard L. Day together with your editorial response which appeared in the September 4 issue of RTN.

NARP, like RTN, has been criticized from time to time for being too "negative" about Amtrak. Our response has been about the same, if not as articulate, as yours. While the danger exists that the anti-passenger train forces will seize upon our criticism to argue that the whole thing should be junked, we believe that we would be much less credible if we tried to con Congress and others into believing that Amtrak is doing a great job when it so clearly is not. Moreover, no matter how unpleasant it may be to Amtrak for NARP and RTN to call attention to its shortcomings, such criticism is bound to have a beneficial effect by prodding Amtrak to do better.

Anthony Haswell, Chairman
National Association of Railroad Passengers
Washington, D.C.

I liked your letter to Caspar Weinberger (RTN, Sept. 18). You are right, the future of Amtrak is in the hands of those in the White House. I sent the following telegram to Sen. Cranston along with a copy to the President:

"Senator Cranston: The Congress, composed of the true representatives of the American people granted Amtrak funds for improvement of passenger trains for the use of the American people who desire an alternative to highways and crowded airports. Caspar Weinberger is holding back funds that were awarded Amtrak! This is not the first effort he has made to harm Amtrak. I am asking you to do something to force release of these funds. I am tried of the Nixon administration's attempts to grant only funds for programs Nixon wants. If the money were for the SST I assure you he would not hesitate to release it. Being that the Nixon administration is trying to strangle Amtrak, I will at this late date not support Nixon and I will do all in my power to inform people of his attempts through Caspar Weinberger to crush Amtrak!"

Stephen Lannes
Oakland, Calif.

A NOTE ABOUT our publication schedule: RTN is still about 3 weeks behind schedule. Like a train that falls behind, it becomes increasingly hard to make up time--especially if the schedule has no padding. If you are a new subscriber, we should explain that the date on the cover should be more or less ignored, and the "projected mailing date" given at the bottom of this page should be your guide as to when the issue was published. We are considering possible ways of catching up. In any case, RTN always bears the freshest possible news when it reaches you--the news is about 48 hours old when it goes into the mail.

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STAFF: James Russell, Editor; Paul Rayton, Editor at Large; Steve Farrar, East Coast Editor; Doug Ellis, East Coast Photographer.
Projected mailing date for this issue: Nov. 1

AMTRAK'S FALL AND WINTER SCHEDULE CHANGES

Amtrak is releasing new timetables effective October 29, the changeover date from Advanced Standard Time to Standard Time. One nationwide timetable plus regional timetables similar to those released in September and early October are being published. The nationwide schedule, with a printing of not over 100,000, should prove to be a collector's item.

Train changes include announcement of the dropping of the FLORIDA SPECIAL name this winter, with the SILVER METEOR taking over the function of that historic train. It will have hostesses, fashion shows and games, movies and candlelight dining with free champagne as the FLORIDA SPECIAL has since late in the last century with the exception of World War II years. There will be three other Northeast-to-Florida trains running this year: the CHAMPION will serve Florida's West Coast and the SILVER STAR both Florida coasts. A new train, the VACATIONER, will be added, leaving New York at 6:35pm with Miami arrival the following afternoon.

The FLORIDIAN's running time is shortened 1 hr 25 mins northbound and 1 hr southbound effective Oct. 29. Departure times remain unchanged. Amtrak said the time saving is due to speeding up the schedule on PC track between Chicago and Louisville.

Amtrak was to open its new Cincinnati depot Oct. 29 with a resultant 45-min speedup of the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY. The new station, at 1901 River Road, is the first complete station to be built by Amtrak. About 100 others are scheduled to be renovated or replaced. The new $270,000 facility will save Amtrak about a half million dollars a year. The small station is close to trackside and has free parking for 25 automobiles. It will be open 7am to midnight and will have baggage handling.

The southbound PANAMA LIMITED now leaves Chicago at 6:10pm and arrives New Orleans 11:30am. A train has been added to the Philadelphia-Harrisburg line, leaving Philly at 7:11am weekdays and leaving Harrisburg 9:10pm Sunday thru Friday. The expanded TURBOTRAIN schedules appear in the nationwide timetable for the first time: leave Boston 7:05 and 11:05 am, leave New York northbound 12:10 and 4:10 pm. Arizona and Michigan do not honor Advanced Standard Time, so train schedules in those states will be one hour later starting Oct. 29.

The MONTREALER's schedule has been improved, and it will appear in the nationwide timetable for the first time. It will arrive in Montreal 50 mins earlier--at 9:15 am--than previously, and the WASHINGTONIAN will leave Montreal at 7:30 pm, 20 mins later, with arrival and departure times for points north of Springfield being adjusted slightly.

Important news for travelers on the West Coast is the announcement that the COAST STARLIGHT will run daily instead of tri-weekly during the Christmas season. Observers have been calling for such a service for some time, pointing out the poor equipment utilization necessary with the tri-weekly schedule and the necessity to make double station stops because of the train length, thus hurting timekeeping. NARP had pointed out that cars from the train usually sat in the Los Angeles yards for 2½ days under the old schedule while Amtrak turned away potential riders for lack of equipment.

Additional changes upcoming for winter (about mid-December) are the speeding up of the TEXAS CHIEF's padded schedule by 1 hour and the operation of a through Montreal-Miami sleeper.

CONGRESS GRANTS AMTRAK A FEW MORE MILLION

The big news of the last half-month was that Congress had agreed to let Amtrak have $9.1 million to pay for new and experimental services. As reported last issue, Amtrak asked Congress for $57 million that was cut out of an earlier request. $47.9 of this was to be for capital improvements--new trains and track improvements. However, Congress in mid-October compromised on $9.1 million to pay for the international routes it had asked Amtrak to open--two to Canada and one to Mexico. The money also is to cover losses on the "experimental" NORTH COAST HIAWATHA and POTOMAC SPECIAL trains. And finally, it will finance the coming San Joaquin Valley route in California (see article elsewhere). The White House's Office of Management and Budget still must approve the funds, however.

AMTRAK TO INITIATE NEW TEXAS EAGLE

Provided Amtrak's $9.1 million appropriation is approved by the Office of Management and Budget, the coming service to Mexico will be by way of St. Louis, Little Rock, and Dallas, with a completely new route, a modified version of Missouri Pacific's former TEXAS EAGLE. South of Dallas, the train will probably run thru Temple, Austin, San Antonio to Laredo, possibly reaching Waco as well. Without the extra appropriations, Amtrak would have had to make due with running the train as a connection from the TEXAS CHIEF, at least at first. The most southerly part of the route is still unsettled, as Amtrak is running into physical problems in switching from one railroad's tracks to another's. The service is not expected to begin before the first of the new year.

Residents of Arkansas are happy about the new plans. The Arkansas Gazette editorialized (Oct. 9): "This is good news for the state and for all of us who believe that the national system of railroad passenger service must be reinvigorated, in the national interest, to provide another travel alternative in common carriers besides planes and buses. If there must be subsidies for a time, perhaps a long time, then so be it. Government subsidies in the national interest are something less than revolutionary by now."

The outcome of the planning for the train to Mexico restores the faith of many in the power of persistence of individuals to get needed changes made. Of those who worked to route the train thru Arkansas, currently without Amtrak service, passenger train supporter John A. Mills of Little Rock must take much of the credit. As C. L. Taylor wrote concerning him in the Arkansas Gazette Oct. 21, "Amtrak may call the new train from St. Louis to Dallas something like 'The Eagle,' but it would be more appropriate to call it 'The John Mills Special' dedicated to a man who proved that one man can do something."

AWARD FOR METROLINER ADVERTISING GIVEN TO AMTRAK

The Discover America Travel Organizations late in October presented their annual Outdoor Golden Hunting Horn Award to Amtrak for its series of four METROLINER ads run in the Northeast. The first ad read: "Think of the Metroliner as a plane that never leaves the ground," while the second said: "Amtrak Metroliners spread their wings," and the third, "Connecticut's own Metroliner now leaves Stamford at a more civilized hour in the morning." The last showed 14 Metroliners rowed up and was captioned "Our shuttle."

East Coast Report

by Steve Farrar

FLOOD IN VIRGINIA AGAIN--

Torrential rains hit Virginia October 5, and Amtrak #99 was trapped in sudden floodwaters just east of Charlottesville. Train 51, following from Washington, was halted at Gordonsville. Passengers were removed by bus to complimentary accommodations in a Charlottesville hotel, and left Charlottesville next morning at 8am on a one-coach train to Clifton Forge. There, No. 50's consist was reversed and carried the passengers to Chicago, and the coach train returned east. Freight service was resumed between Newport News and Charlottesville Oct. 7, and passenger service Oct. 11, with a bus provided in the interim.

N&W's old Petersburg passenger depot was hit by fast-moving 10-foot floodwaters from the Appomattox River. The old ACL track thru the depot was washed out and may not be replaced, which does not bode well for any restoration of Norfolk-Washington passenger service. A couple weeks after the flood, the N&W dismantled the platform sheds.

The southbound SOUTHERN CRESCENT was rerouted via Richmond the night of Oct. 5, but otherwise Southern Railway service was not interrupted.

Amtrak uniforms appeared on the GEORGE WASHINGTON/JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY run between Newport News and Richmond in mid-October.

The MONTREALER/WASHINGTONIAN is to get a snack bar in addition to a full diner. Amtrak's original plan was to use only a snack bar, but train patronage has been so high that this proved inadequate.

The NIGHT OWL is showing good patronage also--in fact, about twice was Amtrak had projected! It carries up to 150-200 on weekends, and about 80 on weekdays. The regular consist is two sleepers, two coaches, and a diner, compared to the original plan for one coach and one sleeper.

The NIGHT OWL was spotted Oct. 25 carrying the 6-bedroom lounge car "Pine Tree State," used as a VIP car on the first run of the MONTREALER, and still showing the line number ED-3 (for Edwin Edel of Amtrak).

The ILLINOIS ZEPHYR has been averaging 90-100 passengers each trip. Amtrak reportedly wants to arrange for on-campus ticket sales for this partly state-operated train.

Shoddy work in Penn Central shops reportedly endangered the life of PC President Moore last July 15. Amtrak coach 4447 (ex-UP 5514) emerged from PC's Beech Grove shops July 12 with a complete refurbishing. Running west on the Washington section of the BROADWAY LIMITED the 15th (being rerouted thru Philadelphia because of the floods), the car was discovered at Wilmington to have one truck aflame. The car was removed from the consist, but if it had gone on to Philadelphia, the likelihood of its disintegrating with disastrous results would have been great. The train consisted of a GG-1 engine and 5 cars, the last being Moore's business car #1.

Steam excursions are planned to begin this fall on the Southwest Virginia RR. The 18-mile line between Mendota and Moccasin Gap, VA, will be used with Buffalo Creek & Gauley #4 steam engine, coaches and a baggage car.

ABC Television had offered to cover a great steam race between engines NKP 759 (now at Steamtown, VT) and RDG 2102 (now in Lebanon, NJ) on the Penn Central main line 144 miles thru central Pennsylvania.

However, PC President Moore nixed the proposal, not desiring to tie up the road's busiest freight line for a whole day.

Amtrak has signed a lease for 25 years for the use of L&N's station in Louisville.

AUTO-TRAIN's business is so good, reports the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 24) that it plans to add a second train on its East Coast route. It now owns 5 diners, 11 sleepers, 13 full-length domes, and 7 dome coaches (from MP). Additionally, it owns 33 ex-UP dome coaches that are being refurbished. Its 5 GE engines are leased thru a Chicago bank. It has an option on the purchase of 40 CN auto carriers. The Corporation said it would have to move its Lorton, VA, terminal, ad trackage and loading ramps, and lease more engines in order to run another train. It will show a loss for its first fiscal year because of startup costs. Reservations are almost booked solid thru next February.

A clever column appeared in the Virginia Chamber of Commerce magazine, Commonwealth, for October. James Wamsley's At Large column presented a facetious account of riding Amtrak and criticizing it because it's not as bad as the good old days. Sample: "After we hooked onto the BROADWAY's main section at Harrisburg I headed for the diner. I thought that maybe there at least I'd find some of the old-time ways, but I was wrong. You and I know, Mel, that the only way to run a railroad dining car is to have the food so bad and expensive that you drive the passengers away, because there's no way to make money on a dining car. Amtrak has it all backwards, like everything else. The food was good and it was about as reasonable as Shoney's or Col. Sanders. They even had a good stock of wine. And then they had to rub it all in with a line in big letters on the bottom of the menu: 'It has been our pleasure to prepare this repast for your enjoyment.' Did you ever hear anything so high-toned? After I'd ate, the waiter even asked me if I'd like a morsel of Cranesberry cheese."

NARP on Oct. 26 publicly urged that the Northeast Corridor be expanded to Richmond, Virginia. In a letter to Amtrak, NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell said that the Richmond area is becoming part of the highly urbanized Northeast Corridor. He said Amtrak should consider Boston to Richmond as the "new" Northeast Corridor and expand its services accordingly. As a start, NARP suggested an extension of the NIGHT OWL to Richmond. NARP also urged Amtrak to undertake a study of electrification of the RF&P Railroad to permit METROLINER operation from New York to Alexandria and Richmond.

(To send news directly to Steve Farrar, use his new address: 3537 Grove Ave., Apt. 4, Richmond, VA 23221.)

TRAGIC CHICAGO COMMUTER TRAIN WRECK

The deadliest railroad accident in the U.S. since 1958 occurred in Chicago during the morning commute rush October 30. One Illinois Central Gulf commuter train struck the rear of another, demolishing one bi-level commuter car and one older-type car, killing at least 39 people and injuring about 200. The crash happened near the 27th Street platform, less than 10 mins from downtown. The two trains were running a few minutes apart, and reportedly the first ran by the station and attempted to back up, but apparently did not back enough to activate automatic signals, and the second train plowed into it. The previous worst accident was at Elizabethport, NJ, Sept. 15, 1958, where 48 were killed.

A Summer's Lesson:

THE LOS ANGELES AMTRAK RESERVATION BUREAU 1972

By Robert S. Fried

(In this unusual narrative, Mr. Fried--who is a railfan, a train rider, and a student of transportation at UCLA--finds himself in still another role, that of an Amtrak information-reservation clerk for one busy summer, which gives him a very different perspective on rail travel from that of most writers about passenger trains.)

Imagine for a moment people phoning you all day long asking about passenger trains. Imagine them asking you whether trains are any fun, what it's like to eat on a train, whether it's a good idea to get a bedroom, what routes are scenic, whether there's any way to take a short ride just to see what it's like, what you do on a train for three days if you're going from Los Angeles to New York. If you were in this situation, whatever you said would naturally contribute to making or breaking passenger trains. There is a job where you are actually paid money to do this for eight hours at a stretch. The job is that of an information-reservation clerk for Amtrak. I was lucky enough to hold this position this summer at the Santa Fe Los Angeles Reservation Bureau.

We've all heard of the increases in patronage this year. But it is hard to realize, without being in the midst of the patrons, exactly what is going on. When I read Roger Lewis' claim that Amtrak had turned the tide of the decline in ridership, I had my doubts. At best I had expected Amtrak patronage to be level for the first year and resume the decline this year. After all, even Santa Fe patronage had dwindled into a hopeless decline like all the rest of the passenger trains. There seemed no hope except to follow David Morgan's advice: "Ride 'em while you got 'em." So I rode them.

I rode right into that reservation bureau--on train #773 from Santa Ana. (I was the last person to use 20-ride commuter tickets on the Santa Fe. They were sold until the Santa Fe ticket office in LAUPT was closed June 30, 1972.) A short taxi ride from LAUPT to the Santa Fe building, up the elevator, and I was in where an education was to enfold.

The reservation bureau was Santa Fe's and actually a temporary office set up during the war. Many employees had been there since day one, and others had transferred in from dwindling numbers of other offices around town. This reservation bureau and the City Ticket Office between 5th and 6th on Olive are the very last of their breed in Southern California. (The CTO, incidentally, is where you send your money if you want to buy a ticket by mail. Call either them or the reservation bureau to make your reservation and tell the person you intend to send in your check. Simply send your check to the Amtrak City Ticket Office at 523 S. Olive, LA 90013.)

Nearly everything while I was there was in a state of flux. Major changes which took place usually caused some unnecessary confusion, mostly because they were fairly contrary to all historical moves. A notable change was the closure of the AT&SF ticket office in LAUPT. Having been their last trainee and going over to say goodbye to everyone that final night on my way to #774, I found it difficult to think very positively about Amtrak. The SP office was kept open to sell all tickets, as you know.

While some may argue that SP ticket clerks are not to be entrusted with our

passenger trains, I have found facts to be quite the contrary. Stations all over the country call reservation bureaus, obviously to make reservations for their clients. With extremely rare exception I found that the average ticket clerk cares very much about passenger trains. He is not worried about losing his job, since he can usually move to the freight department with little trouble. These people approach a liking for trains from a completely different viewpoint than most rail enthusiasts. Their perception of a passenger train is more realistic than ours, but the feeling that comes out of it is quite the same.

People being people, it is very hard for a railroader to be more than tersely polite to a railfan. After a clerk attempts to sell passenger trains for years only to see his efforts thrwarted by the trends of decline we are all familiar with, it becomes increasingly difficult to keep any enthusiasm going. While the flame becomes almost totally extinguished in some, others remain hopeful. Then a railfan walks up, with camera clicking, asks about the fare to Unknowntown, attempts to talk the clerk out of timetables which the clerk collects too, and generally makes an annoyance of himself.

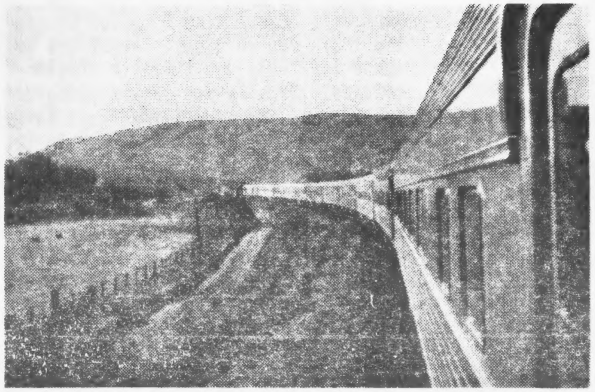
Railfans can be spotted from two blocks away. I was sitting in a refurbished Santa Fe coach the other day while a railfan was telling his friends that this was a Burlington car and that they should therefore realize what a nice road Burlington Northern is. Another time while drinking my usual in the lounge car on 774, an identical lounge car was sitting two tracks over in LAUPT. Some kid was telling his parents that it was an RDC! I left.

Some passengers are downright obnoxious. Anyone who has ridden in a coach over 150 miles is well aware of them. They have an effect on reservation clerks. Although you try to be nice till you're blue in the face, nothing you do is good enough for them. I found myself apologizing to the next caller before he even said anything so in case I still sounded annoyed this next person wouldn't be offended. Most people, however, are either quite pleasant or extremely interesting to deal with.

When we see a clerk actively discouraging people from going on a train at all, we should stop to consider why he seems to be cutting his own throat. If you, for example, had been selling tickets during the days of the ARGONAUT and the BLACK DIAMOND and had witnessed equipment deteriorate to the point where in the old days it would have become the rider coach on a mail train--and they string ten cars like that together and call <u>that</u> the COAST DAYLIGHT--you too would treat the DAYLIGHT as you would have the rider coach. Don't blame the railroads for that, however, blame your local highway lobbyist.

Amtrak, though muddling through, is starting to turn the tables. While I tried to give what I would like to consider great service to the passengers, our reservation bureau was losing upwards of 300 calls a day. There were 27 lines open at any one time and we could hold about 80 callers on a tape recording which you will undoubtedly get if you call during the morning. There were some times when the tape recording was not necessary. This would occur after 6:30 PM, and on Sunday afternoons. There were times when it was important not to let someone off the phone. Usually selling of the idea of rail travel was necessary. The problem of lost calls was so acute that people who were not going on expensive trips would not get the red carpet treatment. There isn't much good reason why everyone should not be treated equally and as well as possible.

Although the reservation bureau was expanded some, it was nearly impossible to get the quality of service up to excellent. New clerks were hired to



"The COAST DAYLIGHT and the STARLIGHT proved to be two trains in one, neither of which had any business being the same train at the same time."

simply answer the phone, and while they were given some intensive on-job-training, they had little feel for what they were doing. Eventually the experienced clerks would have the new people sit with them so that when the new clerks made some unbelievable mistakes, the passenger could be put on hold and the experienced clerk could rectify the situation. This led to many frayed nerves on both clerks and on the passenger who would now be getting conflicting information. The passenger would likely hang up and call again to ask someone else. Very often fares were quoted inaccurately, schedules would be mis-read, and people were told trains didn't go where they really do.

Although there is not too much in the Official Guide, knowing what was there was not a requirement. No doubt CN, CP, B&O, CSS&SB, LIRR, B&M, PC, RDG, PRSL, NY&LB, CMStP&P, CRI&P, EL, E-M, BCR, ON, AC, SP, JCL, SIRT, NdeM, CHP, and many others lost much potential business simply because either the information was in the Guide and few people took the trouble to look it up, or the information was not even in the Guide, and therefore impossible to find. There were no transit maps of any city available, few city tourist brochures, and nothing to send people, pertaining to Amtrak, except for timetables and Amtrak tour brochures. I hope Amtrak intends to change this situation.

All too often prospective passengers would ask about schedules to places where Amtrak goes, but not without difficulty. On the top of this list are Salt Lake City and Denver. The only way to get to SLC from LA is to take the DAYLIGHT to Oakland, stay overnight, and then take the SF ZEPHYR, only to reach Ogden about 3am. Needless to say, very few people bothered. For Denver, we would advise getting off #20 at Raton or La Junta and catching a bus. An intelligent move would be to reinstate the CITY OF LA.

An interesting pattern occurred that should prove to any reasonable mind that passenger trains are not dead, and that the original Amtrak map is far too skeletal. Every train that left LA this summer with reservations was sold out. The mere fact that they were sold out might suggest that the Amtrak route map was well chosen and adequate. The real problem was that the trains were sold out sometime in advance. Let's examine the trains specifically.

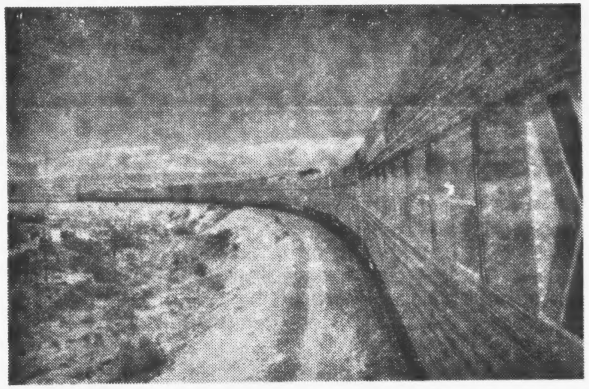
The COAST DAYLIGHT and the STARLIGHT proved to be two trains in one, neither of which had any business being the same train at the same time. The DAYLIGHT'S true patronage could be seen only on the days the STARLIGHT ran. On the days the DAYLIGHT ran by itself, it sold out about a week in advance. The passengers lucky enough to want the train on the days it was the STARLIGHT were luckier, because the STARLIGHT would have a lot of people getting on farther north and so seats to Santa Barbara could be had as late as 5 days ahead of time. Most people who wanted to go to Santa Barbara called us 2 or 3 days before train time. So most passengers to Santa Barbara were turned down or put on waiting lists. On the pure DAYLIGHT, Santa Barbara seats were sold out no later than 7 to 10 days before departure. If seats to Santa Barbara were "cut", that automatically meant that

seats from LA to San Francisco were sold out. This would occur about 10 days to two weeks before departure. Santa Barbara station was able to come up with enough seats to sell northbound, but southbound from SBA was sold out.

For the STARLIGHT, the biggest headache was to get any space north of Oakland. The train sold out at least three weeks in advance and sometimes four. Without exception, every ticket clerk wanted the STARLIGHT to run daily, the DAYLIGHT to be separate from it, and the LARK to be reinstated. The bedrooms on the STARLIGHT sometimes went empty from LA to Oakland. Bedrooms and roomettes

There was much problem with the BROADWAY. Every time I called Chicago, the train was sold out. About the only space available on it was in slumbercoaches. Luckily for people going to Washington, there were five ways to get there from LA. I usually tried to get them to use the CHIEF and the GEORGE WASHINGTON, since I heard that the latter wasn't doing too well, and since reservations were easiest to get this way. Most people were not particularly interested in having me recite all the ways to get there, so it was usually left to my discretion.

"The SUPER CHIEF was sold out three weeks in advance without exception. The EL CAPITAN was the same story."



are obviously for overnight trains. It would have been easy to fill a LARK every night and it would have been sold out about 5-7 days in advance. Most bedrooms on the STARLIGHT were used by passengers going beyond Oakland, but no more than ½ of them went empty to Oakland because overflow coach passengers were placed in them.

On the Santa Fe, the SUPER CHIEF was sold out 3 weeks in advance without exception. There were plenty of tour groups on it which would have been welcome in leaner days. Their effect was to sell the train out faster than usual. The EL CAPITAN was the same story. It would usually sell out 2-3 weeks in advance. With the CHIEF running, one would expect people to use it. It would sell out only about a week in advance. Toward the end of the summer, patronage began dropping on the CHIEF in the coaches, and the waiting list for the pullmans became shorter. The slumbercoach was not a raving success, mainly because most of the slumbercoaches were bad ordered.

On the New York through car, using the SUPER CHIEF--NATIONAL LIMITED, the pullman space sold out three weeks beforehand and the coach likewise. Due to car shortage problems (which turned out to be the truth), SP DAYLIGHT coaches were used. Santa Fe equipment can't clear third rails (unless Jackie Gleason rents the train), and about the only thing around was SP equipment. We attempted not to tell passengers about the through coach because of this, but to no avail. No matter what a few of us said, the passengers liked the idea of a through car so much that they went anyway.

Then there was the SUNSET LIMITED. If anyone thinks that train suffers from patronage problems, he is far from the truth. Much of the patronage consisted of minority groups. Typically Mexican-Americans wanted to go to El Paso and Blacks wanted to go to Houston and east to New Orleans. The SUNSET coach space sold out at least two weeks in advance. Extra cars were put on the train, but they too filled quickly. A few times, some of the Black people insinuated that I was exercising racial prejudice by telling them that the train was sold out. When I'd tell them that Amtrak was experiencing an unprecedented increase in traffic they would retort that no one rides trains. If I could not convince them that the train was really sold out, I would ask one of the Black reservation clerks to come and tell the person I wasn't kidding.

There were some people who began crying when they found out that they were stranded in LA with a train ticket and no reservation. For many people a trip of a few thousand miles was a major undertaking and to have it ruined by something as trivial as a reservation was too much to take.

There is a rule about pass riders which states that they may not make a reservation until 24 hours in advance. Needless to say, if anyone takes a survey of pass rider mileage, they will undoubtedly find the lowest amount of pass riding in history. If the survey analyst construes this to mean that pass riders would rather go some other way, he would be dead wrong. It was impossible for a pass rider to get on any train leaving LA except for the SAN DIEGANS.

"It would have been easy to fill a LARK every night, and it would have been sold out about five to seven days in advance."

Many cities which were not served by Amtrak were sources of considerable demand. Cleveland and Toledo were, of course, shining examples of this as were Las Vegas, Nev., Springfield, Mo., Little Rock, Ar., Shreveport and Baton Rouge, La., Merced, Fresno and Bakersfield, as well as Stockton, Calif., to name a few.

The worst problem after the sold-out train situation was the often abominable routes one would have to tell people about. Many more cities fell under this category than those not served at all. We needed trains which would go to various places on the Amtrak map without forcing people to follow very time consuming and devious routes.

Importantly, this summer has shown that the patronage is back. While passenger traffic may never be up to the levels it was during the war, it should at least increase to the levels of, say, ten years ago. It is impossible to tell where it will really go to unless the system can be expanded to a larger size.

We saw in the newspapers that Amtrak advertised. I even heard some very excellent commercials on the radio, and one I caught on TV. The advertising campaign was rather low key. We cannot recite the Amtrak jingle, while we can recite that for United (The great wide way to --), National (Fly me), Pan Am (Makes the going great), to mention a few. When Amtrak did put out ads they turned into happy disasters for us. More people would call, more calls were lost, trains were sold out farther in advance, and,very importantly, people got the impression that trains were doing better.

It would be wasteful to make a list of recommended routes except to emphasize that people want through cars to every major city covered by Amtrak, SR, and D&RGW from their city. One change of trains is about all they're willing to take. The through bedrooms to Boston were sold out 5 weeks in advance. There were other ways to get there, but the first requirement was for through service, and the next for speed.

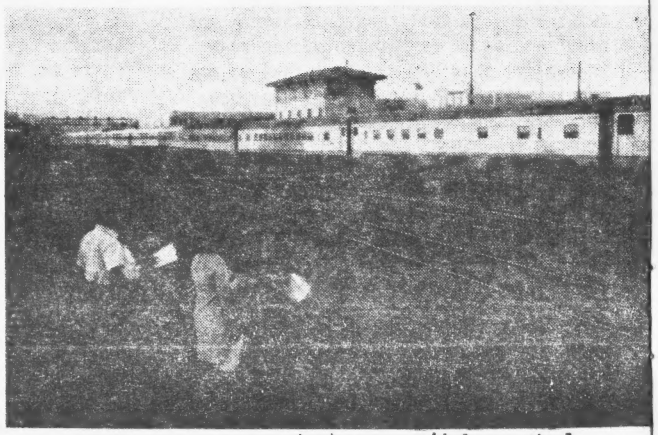
Many questions were asked about where one was once he got there and how does he get to some suburb or hotel from the train. With that sort of information not at our fingertips, it was hard to tell people all they wanted to know. Pan Am has the right idea when they claim they are more than an airline.

Amtrak, being the only major carrier of inter-city rail traffic, is responsible not only for operating passenger trains but also for providing excellent service. This is what the public wants and they will not settle for less. They are showing that they are interested in passenger trains, but unless Amtrak comes up with much better service than they are now offering, once Amtrak goes through all the new patrons the advertising and general curiousity stir up and fails to show these people good trips, only us railfans will be left as 759 pulls the last SUPER CHIEF.

It is therefore imperative for dedicated people to work for Amtrak. It is just as important to realize that Congress has the real power when it comes to Amtrak funding. Having talked with the public, it is quite obvious that railfans are only a trivial percentage of the train-riding public. I don't

"On the New York through car, using the SUPER CHIEF-NATIONAL LIMITED, the pullman space sold out 3 weeks beforehand and the coach likewise."

Here "foreign" thru cars leave L.A. on the SUPER on June 14. All photos by Paul Rayton.



know what railfans were doing, but they certainly were not going out to Barstow on the CHIEF. No one but a railfan goes to Barstow for one day, and only about 20 people did that all summer. Multiply that by 27 clerks and you get 540. That's about enough to fill one fan trip.

How many railfans actually wrote to Washington about passenger trains? Perhaps they were all convinced by the usual propaganda that passenger trains are a dead issue. It is precisely now that Amtrak is being required to prove to the public that passenger trains are a desirable public asset. If Amtrak fails by not providing the service the public requires, then by failing it may take the whole mass transit concept with it as well. Amtrak has more responsibility charged to it than it realizes. The public is interested, and I just hope Amtrak is up to the task.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"Converting unkempt track into high-speed track should not be attempted using the costly, obsolete method of placing wooden crossties atop crushed ballast.

Instead, liberal use of concrete should be the rule. Experience in Europe has shown that track bases constructed entirely from concrete have the advantage of great strength and permanence as compared to conventional roadbeds."

--National Association of RR Passengers Newsletter, Oct.

"Rail travel in some form still offers the most sensible long range means of meeting the medium length travel needs of the nation. But any attempt now by Amtrak to signal the approach of a quantum leap in rail passenger travel is a public relations pipe dream."

--Salem, Ore., Statesman editorial, Oct. 1

"More and more people understand that fast, efficient mass transit is important even to those who will never use it because of the contribution toward easing the congestion on urban streets and freeways. Sooner or later common sense will prevail even in the U.S. House of Representatives."

--Los Angeles Times editorial, Oct. 5

"The concept of nationalization might not be bad if the Santa Fe were put in charge; the problem is the system might be run like the Penn Central."

--Edwin P. Patton, Passenger Train Journal, Summer (September) issue

Soviet Rail Supremacy?

While America's transportation system operates perilously near to collapse, the Russians have wisely been building up their rail facilities, as USSR Deputy Minister of Railroads Pyotr Muratov relates in this interview condensed from the October issue of Soviet Life magazine.

Q. How much of the country's cargo and passenger traffic is carried by rail?

A. The railroads are the backbone of our country's transport system. They carry over two-thirds of the freight and almost half the passengers.

In 1971, the trains carried more than three billion passengers and hauled over three billion tons of freight.

Q. How would you explain the fact that in the USSR rail leads all means of transport?

A. That's easily answered--because of the geography of our country, its climatic zones, the location of our raw material sources and the processing industries. What other type of transportation could operate under such tough climatic conditions, keep moving such enormous loads of freight for such great distances and carry the colossal numbers of passengers every day from the suburbs to the industrial and administrative centers?

Our various transport facilities don't compete with one another. They're assigned areas of operation which will make for the greatest over-all efficiency. Short-haul runs, especially when goods have to be reloaded from cars to road vehicles, are made by trucks. In summer, freight moves by water, carried by river vessels. Pipelines are fast taking over the movement of oil and oil derivatives. The bulk of passenger traffic over long distances--1,000 to 1,200 miles and over--is handled by planes. Our bus service is developing very rapidly. But when it takes several hours or as much as overnight to get somewhere, people seem to prefer trains.

Our system, in which all forms of transportation develop under one coordinated plan and are considered links in a single transportation system, has thoroughly justified its existence.

Q. The Soviet Union's rail network is about one-tenth the total length of the Earth's railways, but it carries about half the world's freight and one-fifth its passenger traffic. Quite a job for Soviet railroaders, isn't it?

A. It certainly is. Our rail network is almost 84,000 miles long. The United States has two and a half times as much track, but we carry twice as much cargo and 13 times as many passengers.

Nearly 22,000 miles of our lines are electrified, most of them equipped with automatic block signaling, centralized traffic control and train radio communication. We lead the world in electric line mileage and the volume of traffic carried. This large-scale electrification has been accomplished in a relatively short time--most of it in the past 15 years.

The electrified lines make up approximately one-fourth of the total length of Soviet railways, yet they carry almost half the freight. We have very long electric lines: the Moscow--Petrovsky Zavod east of Baikal covers a little more than 3,700 miles, the Leningrad--Leninakan from the Baltic to the southern frontier is 2,175 miles long. Electric wires cross the whole of the Ukraine and stretch across many sections of Transcaucasia, the Urals, Siberia, the Far East, the Arctic and Kazakhstan. Let me repeat that our

electric and diesel traction do not compete, they complement each other. Diesel locomotives now haul trains over lines totaling some 48,000 miles. But the major lines are electrified, with electric traction increasingly using alternating current of industrial frequency.

In the current five-year plan we intend to switch over 3,700 miles of track to electric traction. The length of AC lines is expected to be about 10,500 miles by the end of 1975.

The considerable sums invested in railroad electrification are recouped in three to five years, as a rule, and on most traffic-intensive lines even sooner.

Q. What locomotives and cars do you use? What condition are they in?

A. We have a modern locomotive fleet, including eight-axle AC electric locomotives of almost 9,000-hp and 6,000-hp diesel units.

In the past five years Soviet rail transport was bolstered by some 250,000 freight cars, including 8,000 machine-cooled refrigeration cars for perishables, and 10,000 all-metal passenger cars, many of them air-conditioned. For commuter services industry supplies us with more than 4,800 comfortable electric and diesel trains. In the next five years deliveries of passenger cars will go up another 24 percent. We will also be getting 425,000 freight cars during the same period.

Our rolling stock needs are met mainly by Soviet industry. But some of our locomotives and cars are imported from other socialist countries of Europe. Czechoslovakia builds passenger electric locomotives for us, Poland, Rumania and the German Democratic Republic cars, Hungary diesel trains. In turn, we supply these countries with heavy-duty main-line diesel locomotives. This international cooperation is good for all concerned.

Q. What plans do Soviet railroads have for development in the near future?

A. Our specialists see the railroads continuing to carry the bulk of traffic for the next 15 to 20 years, remaining the country's chief transport arteries.

Now we are focusing on increasing the throughput capacity of railroads, on automatic control and on mechanization of labor-consuming handling and repair operations.

We expect to build 3,000 to 3,700 miles of new rail lines, principally in the country's Eastern areas. These will help tap the natural resources of Siberia, Kazakhstan and Central Asia, and relieve some of the busiest lines. In addition, 4,400 to 5,000 miles of second track will be laid on specially intensive sections. The average horsepower of electric locomotives will rise 18 per cent and that of diesel locomotives, 13 per cent.

There will be a considerable increase in the number of computer centers. They will provide the base for a single automatic control system of rail transport. Electronic machines are now taking over such jobs as planning and registering carriage operations, making up payrolls, keeping records and preparing accounts. Current computer techniques being introduced will help us to handle our long-distance, many-faceted railway operations much more efficiently.

A good deal of attention will also be given to developing passenger traffic. We have as many as 17,000 long-distance, local and suburban trains leaving terminals every day. We have regular direct rail links with 24 countries in Europe and Asia and are planning to increase the volume of passenger carriage and the speeds of long-distance and suburban trains. Express trains with speeds of 25 miles per hour are being built for the Moscow-Leningrad line.

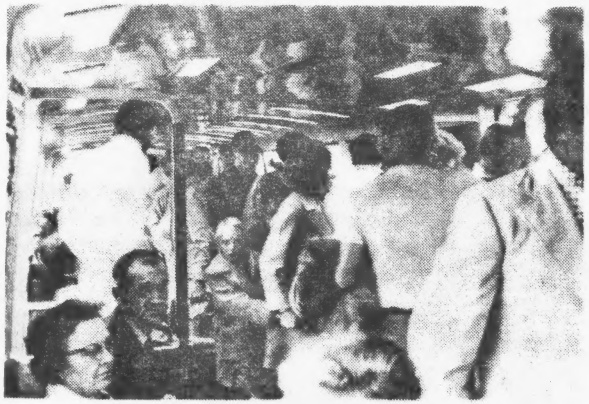
So technical progress on the railways continues, and more rapidly than ever.

Urban-Suburban Transit

THOSE "WORLD SERIES" TRAINS

Little old Oakland has always been ribbed by its more glamorous neighbor, San Francisco, and often reminded that Gertrude Stein once said of Oakland that "There's no there there." But twice in the past two months the City of Oaks has had its day in the sun. First in September when BART opened there, leaving San Francisco distinctly out of it. Then in mid-October Oakland brought the baseball World Series home, ultimately winning the first international sports championship for the Bay Area. The World Series games in Oakland provided an interesting test of the new BART system and some intriguing data for urban transit planners.

On October 17 the first game was to be played at the Oakland Coliseum, a few blocks from BART's Coliseum station in East Oakland. BART directors saw the crush coming, and advised baseball fans to be aboard BART by 4pm to reach the 5:30 game and avoid snarling the commuter rush hour. Most of them seemed to have followed this advice, but trains quickly filled, and many were left standing on platforms as a New York-type crush developed aboard the trains--except that the riders were in good humor, befitting the holiday air of the occasion. Seeing the trains jammed, even worse than on BART's opening day, system operators ran some of them express, leaving bewildered patrons waiting on platforms and riders inside roaring with laughter as trains would halt and then move on without doors opening.

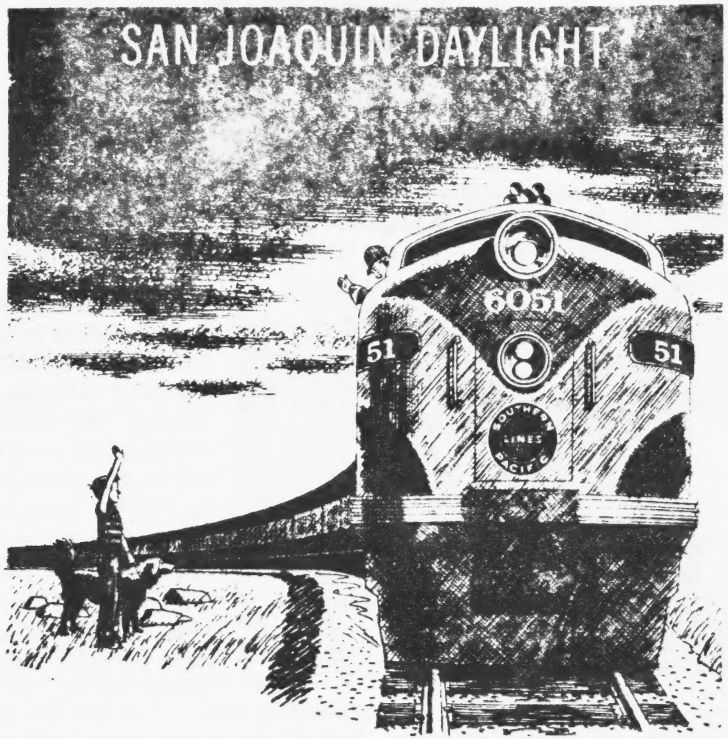


A New York subway type of crush developed on BART trains carrying fans to the World Series games in Oakland. BART still has a shortage of cars, tho its first 4-car train was run Oct. 26. BART has had to delay opening of the remainder of its lines by about 3 months. The next line, to Richmond, opens early in 1973. Photo by Message Media.

But the real surprise came later. Precisely as the game was about to start, a freak thunder storm--on the ninth day of unprecedented October rain--swept over the stadium with a drenching shower that forced cancellation of the game. BART was not prepared for the onslaught of returning fans during rush hour, and a second mob scene developed. To add to the confusion, the storm created the worst traffic jam in Bay Area history when a propane-loaded truck skidded and overturned on the Nimitz Freeway, causing its closure for 7 hours. Several other accidents occurred almost simultaneously. Many fans leaving the game found the jammed parking lot hopeless and abandoned their cars there, taking to the BART trains instead. BART estimated it carried 7300 passengers to the rained-out game. Ridership continues to rise, and reached a record peak on the Oct. 23 Veterans Day holiday when 30,600 people rode the trains.

RETURN OF THE SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT

As we reported last issue, Amtrak plans to revive train service in the San Joaquin Valley of California. It is reported that the funds for this purpose have been approved by Congress, and apparently it is only a matter of time until



the great diesel engines pulling red-white-and-blue trimmed cars will be trucking up and down the great flat interior valley. Service cannot get underway this year, since the Mexican service has a higher priority for completion, and Amtrak has all its resources now at work on that international route. But presumably early in 1973 the Oakland-Bakersfield run will get underway.

Amtrak has not yet made a decision about the train's name, but the route seems fixed: Oakland to Martinez via SP, to Stockton on Santa Fe, to Bakersfield on SP, with a bus connection to Los Angeles. The former SP route carried the trains thru the Tehachapi Mountains south of Bakersfield using the famous "loop," and thence across a portion of the Mojave Desert, serving the now-quickly growing towns of Mojave, Lancaster and Palmdale. The bus can make the route over the mountains faster on Interstate 5, but misses the aforementioned towns. Railfans are still grimly laughing over SP's recent refusal to run an Amtrak excursion over the Tehachapis (where it shares its tracks with Santa Fe), claiming that Santa Fe had so many freights loaded with potatoes on the route that congestion would result. This so-called "potato train incident" made it clear that SP did not want passenger trains using the loop, and Amtrak will avoid it.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

PITTSBURGH WOULD like daily service to Washington DC restored, and would prefer a new TURBOTRAIN on the route. County Commissioner William Hunt asked Amtrak to look into the matter..... SAN ANTONIO Express-News reported last month that a reader with a simple question like how to get to Indianapolis by train received an Amtrak response with a route "that would take 65 hours and include 32 hours of layovers which require hotels, taxis and other complications that have all the makings of a nightmare on a family-sized trip." The paper also figured out the trip would average 20 mph for the 1200 miles. They called on a local railfan who quickly worked out a 27-hour faster route that would simply change to the TEXAS CHIEF instead of staying on the SUNSET. The paper remarked that the Amtrak number had just appeared in the telephone book after more than a year, and had already been changed when it was dialed. Also the Amtrak ticket offices are closed during "prime time"--5 pm till midnight..... AN INTERESTING account of traveling the BROADWAY LIMITED appears in Travel & Leisure, the American Express Company's magazine, autumn issue, by novelist Nathaniel Benchley. Quote: "...a request for the wine list brought a stricken look to the attendant's face; there was a domestic sauterne in what looked like a large pill bottle, and one bottle of domestic claret that had turned to mud. There were, of course, bottled cocktails and domestic beer, so the meal was not without its alcoholic accents, but Continental it could never be called"..... HIGHWAY LOBBY: latest scandals and tragedies--one of the best popular articles on the Lobby appeared in the NY Times Magazine Oct. 15, by William V. Shannon, entitled "The untrustworthy Highway Fund." On Labor Day weekend, we neglected to mention before, 579 people were killed on the highways; but wait, relax--it was under the the National Safety Council's prediction of 580, so it's o.k. And thru this September California's traffic fatalities increased 7.4% compared with the same 9 months of 1971. Last March the state's road deaths were up nearly 30% over those of March 1971.....

* * *

NEW WILDLIFE Refuge at south end of San Francisco Bay was viewed from an Amtrak train Oct. 26 by Secretary of the Interior Rogers Morton. The all-SP equipment special with open baggage car started off from San Francisco and went around the bay. Not known whether it crossed SP's freight-only Dumbarton bridge. You can see much of the refuge from the COAST DAYLIGHT between San Jose and Oakland. Look for the old town of Drawbridge, which has sunken into the marshland near the Leslie Salt Co..... WINNIE-THE-POOH campaign train, a stunt sponsored by Sears Roebuck and Disneyland to interest kids in politics, brought some publicity to Amtrak trains. Costumed characters left Oakland on the DAYLIGHT Oct. 21..... RUMORS PERSIST that Amtrak will change its Chicago-Detroit route to use the Grand Trunk line and avoid the poor Penn Central track that presently keeps patronage down..... TEXAS READERS will be interested to hear of the Austin Committee for Public Transportation (2408 Ware Rd., Austin, TX, 78741), affiliated with NARP. Its first newsletter, fall issue, is now out..... HIGHWAY LOBBY should think about rebuilding railroad rights of way with concrete ties instead of the old-fashioned wood and gravel, NARP said in mid-October. This should help highway builders financially if trust fund is cut back, and would help build a balanced transportation system as well (see QUOTES, p. 12)..... CLEVELAND UNION Station will be purchased by U.S. Realty Investments, reported the Wall Street Journal (Oct. 25) for $12.1 million as part of a beginning downtown building development running ultimately to $250 million. The station is mostly owned by Penn Central, and the railroad's overseers and the ICC must approve the transaction..... ALL AMTRAK'S 400 ticket offices throughout the U.S. now accept these six major national credit cards: American Express, Master Charge, Rail Travel Card, BankAmericard, Carte Blanche, Diners Club, the Corporation announced late in October. They cannot be all accepted aboard trains, however..... PARTY PLATFORMS regarding transportation? See summary in Railway Age, Sept. 11..... FIRST ANNUAL Great Western Outdoor Show took place in the City of Commerce near L.A. Oct. 20-29. It was billed that an Amtrak train would be on display, but it turned out to be only one refurbished SP coach. Amtrak people could be heard giving out much misinformation.....

Readers as Riders

RTN READERS TELL OF THEIR EXPERIENCES ON THE RAILS

Rode my first Amtrak regularly scheduled train--the COAST DAYLIGHT--on Oct. 7 San Jose to Los Angeles. The first thing I noticed compared to pre-Amtrak was how much cleaner the train was, even though the entire train was SP equipment except for the observation lounge car and the baggage car. I would suggest anyone riding #12 to do so on a day the train starts from Oakland as the observation car is the best way to view the Coast Line. I was in the last seat of the car for the entire trip and had the best view of the line I ever have had. Also the train was on time. The service in the diner was not too good. Also had to use Greyhound from Oxnard to L.A. as tunnel work was being done east of Oxnard. Returned on #13 Oct. 8 and the service in the diner was outstanding. The waiter even said "Thank you for traveling and eating with Amtrak and come and see us again." WHAT A DIFFERENCE from former SP service. Left Oxnard 40 mins late, arrived San Jose on time.

Donald Tustin

San Jose, Calif.

Even though I had mostly bad memories of Rock Island from rides in the late '60's, I recently set out to revisit this little-mentioned non-Amtrak railroad. I was very surprised to find that the parlor car on the QUAD CITIES ROCKET turned out to be a dome observation (ex-D&RGW, ex-Chessie) completely refurbished with shag carpeting and small tables for cocktail service throughout, including in the dome. The car is operated by a private operator, Butterworth Tours of Moline, IL, and for the first class round trip Chicago-Rock Island fare of $22.50 dinner and breakfast in the diner are included, including in our case a second piece of apple pie at no charge at dinner and a complimentary pot of hot coffee that awaits each passenger in this car as he boards in the morning. Train personnel report that patronage is up significantly over the past year.

Incidentally, I rode round trip Milwaukee-Chicago on this same trip and each train had one car with bad order air conditioning. And one of those was a refurbished Amtrak car.

Eliot L. Haycock

Iron River, Mich.

I took one of my fairly frequent trips on Amtrak the week of Oct. 15. I boarded the FLORIDIAN at Louisville the 17th, destination Valdesta, GA. I had purchased my ticket at Kansas City Union Station a few weeks earlier, but the agents at Louisville had no record of my holding space in car 5450. No problem, however, since the train was only about 1/3 full. She pulled in from Chicago on time (had left over an hour late). We departed 24 mins late, tho, because of servicing delays. The train consisted of an SCL E8A and an IC E8A, Amtrak baggage-dorm 1522, Seaboard coach 6272, Amtrak lunch counter-lounge 8380, UP sleeper Pacific Gardens, SP sleeper 9019, and SCL coach 5206. We also had SCL office car 308 on the rear. The northbound train had been delayed the day before by a freight wreck in Alabama, and had caused the late departure of the southbound train from Chicago. Because of this, the lunch-counter lounge was used instead of the usual diner-lounge. It had just been received from the shops and had received the full Amtrak treatment inside and out. Unfortunately, it was obvious that the car had received no mechanical refurbishing, for the air conditioning was not working properly, and an overhead fan in the lounge made a horrible racket. Overlooking these defects, the car was a real beauty. The PC crew were extremely courteous altho they were hardpressed providing full meal service from a tiny kitchen designed for light meals... SCL track was better than the L&N and we rolled on with a few slow orders for trackwork. To the best of my knowledge we didn't take siding for a freight once. We arrived at Valdosta about 45 mins late. All-in-all a very enjoyable trip, but the train sure could use some patronage. The crew told me things will get much better this winter. Amtrak still needs to get the equipment in top-notch shape. I feel this and on-time performance are the two major problems that must be solved before Amtrak can really attract and keep new customers.

Capt. Robert H. Kessler

Richards-Gebaur AFB, Mo.

I have just returned from a visit to Yugoslavia and it is truly a railway passenger paradise. Brand new Swedish electric locomotives operating on new concrete tie track vie with ancient steam operations; there is still a large and excellently maintained narrow gauge system and many NEW electric railways are being built. The cities of Zagreb, Sarajevo (a rather new suburban line uses concrete ties on the track), and Belgrade are also tramway paradises.

The old Austro-Hungarian main station in Zagreb, which is in the heart of the city, boasts several hundred departures and arrivals per day! Oh, yes, there are plenty of autos and rather good central highways too.

Ralph Kerchum

Oakland, Calif.

The MONTREALER is called that both ways by all PC New Haven Division employees, even though timetables show it as the WASHINGTONIAN. Still referred to as "Boot." Been on it a half dozen times in first month. On-time performance terrible, usually about 30 to 60 mins late at New Haven. Crowd great. On Oct. 23 they had to add CN coach in Montreal due to coach crowd. Usual consist two sleepers, diner-lounge (ex-C&O, now Amtrak 8301 & 8302 used), and two coaches, usually ex-RF&P 70-seat (now Amtrak 7000-7003). On Oct. 24 had three sleepers, diner and four coaches. Loads seem to average 60 to 80 but on the 23rd arrived in New York with 140, on the 24th had over 100. Particularly impressed with number in sleepers.

Have you heard of new Parlor Car design of Amtrak on cars 3600 &3601? No more swivel seats, but rather redone as lounge with couches and easy chairs all upholstered in Amtrak colors red and white. Been running regularly on MERCHANTS LIMITED New York to Boston.

Northeast service still below par with lots of PC coaches that will not be part of permanent Amtrak roster. This is particularly true on Fridays when crowds are pleasing to any fan. MERCHANTS usually runs with Parlor, Diner (ex-SCL Fitzgerald) and two coaches, but on Fridays runs with seven coaches and over 90% full.

Carleton F. Loucks

New York, N.Y.

ABOUT BACK ISSUES: We are now caught up in mailing out orders for back issues. You can now expect prompt service on future orders, thanks to the addition of secretarial service to our staff. Once again we must offer our apologies for the slowness we have shown in the past in processing these orders. Our secretary, in filling these back orders, was literally driven to tears in reading your letters of inquiry about your orders. We certainly have a faithful readership, and we are most regretful of abusing your faith in us with our inefficiency. All we can plead is that there has been an unprecedented demand for RTN, in addition to the hassle of moving our office this summer. We had to let correspondence go unanswered and orders pile up in order to keep RTN coming out with the latest news. You can expect better things from us in the future. Thank you for your unprecedented patience and enthusiasm for what we're trying to do.

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Eliot L. Haycock

Iron River, Mich.

I took one of my fairly frequent trips on Amtrak the week of Oct. 15. I boarded the FLORIDIAN at Louisville the 17th, destination Valdesta, GA. I had purchased my ticket at Kansas City Union Station a few weeks earlier, but the agents at Louisville had no record of my holding space in car 5450. No problem, however, since the train was only about 1/3 full. She pulled in from Chicago on time (had left over an hour late). We departed 24 mins late, tho, because of servicing delays. The train consisted of an SCL E8A and an IC E8A, Amtrak baggage-dorm 1522, Seaboard coach 6272, Amtrak lunch counter-lounge 8380, UP sleeper Pacific Gardens, SP sleeper 9019, and SCL coach 5206. We also had SCL office car 308 on the rear. The northbound train had been delayed the day before by a freight wreck in Alabama, and had caused the late departure of the southbound train from Chicago. Because of this, the lunch-counter lounge was used instead of the usual diner-lounge. It had just been received from the shops and had received the full Amtrak treatment inside and out. Unfortunately, it was obvious that the car had received no mechanical refurbishing, for the air conditioning was not working properly, and an overhead fan in the lounge made a horrible racket. Overlooking these defects, the car was a real beauty. The PC crew were extremely courteous altho they were hardpressed providing full meal service from a tiny kitchen designed for light meals... SCL track was better than the L&N and we rolled on with a few slow orders for trackwork. To the best of my knowledge we didn't take siding for a freight once. We arrived at Valdosta about 45 mins late. All-in-all a very enjoyable trip, but the train sure could use some patronage. The crew told me things will get much better this winter. Amtrak still needs to get the equipment in top-notch shape. I feel this and on-time performance are the two major problems that must be solved before Amtrak can really attract and keep new customers.

Capt. Robert H. Kessler

Richards-Gebaur AFB, Mo.

I have just returned from a visit to Yugoslavia and it is truly a railway passenger paradise. Brand new Swedish electric locomotives operating on new concrete tie track vie with ancient steam operations; there is still a large and excellently maintained narrow gauge system and many NEW electric railways are being built. The cities of Zagreb, Sarajevo (a rather new suburban line uses concrete ties on the track), and Belgrade are also tramway paradises.

The old Austro-Hungarian main station in Zagreb, which is in the heart of the city, boasts several hundred departures and arrivals per day! Oh, yes, there are plenty of autos and rather good central highways too.

Ralph Kerchum

Oakland, Calif.

The MONTREALER is called that both ways by all PC New Haven Division employees, even though timetables show it as the WASHINGTONIAN. Still referred to as "Boot." Been on it a half dozen times in first month. On-time performance terrible, usually about 30 to 60 mins late at New Haven. Crowd great. On Oct. 23 they had to add CN coach in Montreal due to coach crowd. Usual consist two sleepers, diner-lounge (ex-C&O, now Amtrak 8301 & 8302 used), and two coaches, usually ex-RF&P 70-seat (now Amtrak 7000-7003). On Oct. 24 had three sleepers, diner and four coaches. Loads seem to average 60 to 80 but on the 23rd arrived in New York with 140, on the 24th had over 100. Particularly impressed with number in sleepers.

Have you heard of new Parlor Car design of Amtrak on cars 3600 &3601? No more swivel seats, but rather redone as lounge with couches and easy chairs all upholstered in Amtrak colors red and white. Been running regularly on MERCHANTS LIMITED New York to Boston.

Northeast service still below par with lots of PC coaches that will not be part of permanent Amtrak roster. This is particularly true on Fridays when crowds are pleasing to any fan. MERCHANTS usually runs with Parlor, Diner (ex-SCL Fitzgerald) and two coaches, but on Fridays runs with seven coaches and over 90% full.

Carleton F. Loucks

New York, N.Y.

ABOUT BACK ISSUES: We are now caught up in mailing out orders for back issues. You can now expect prompt service on future orders, thanks to the addition of secretarial service to our staff. Once again we must offer our apologies for the slowness we have shown in the past in processing these orders. Our secretary, in filling these back orders, was literally driven to tears in reading your letters of inquiry about your orders. We certainly have a faithful readership, and we are most regretful of abusing your faith in us with our inefficiency. All we can plead is that there has been an unprecedented demand for RTN, in addition to the hassle of moving our office this summer. We had to let correspondence go unanswered and orders pile up in order to keep RTN coming out with the latest news. You can expect better things from us in the future. Thank you for your unprecedented patience and enthusiasm for what we're trying to do.